

THE EVOLUTION OF THE U. S. BOARD ON GEOGRAPHIC NAMES

Sandra Shaw



Executive Order 399

It is hereby ordered that there be added to the duties of the United States Board on Geographic Names..... **the duty of determining, changing, and fixing place names within the United States and insular possessions, and..... all names.....suggested for any place by any officer or employee of the Government shall be referred to said Board for its consideration and approval before publication.**

In these matters, as in all cases of disputed nomenclature, the decisions of the Board are to be accepted by the Departments of Government as the standard authority.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

THE WHITE HOUSE,

January 23, 1906.

Executive Order 493

The **official title** of the United States Board on Geographic Names is **changed to United States Geographic Board**. In addition to its present duties, advisory powers are hereby granted to this board concerning the preparation of maps compiled, or to be compiled, in the various bureaus and offices of the **Government**, with a special view to the avoidance of unnecessary duplications of work; and for the unification and improvement of the scales of maps, of the symbols and conventions used upon them, and of the methods of representing relief. Hereafter, **all such projects as are of importance shall be submitted to this board for advice before being undertaken.**

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

THE WHITE HOUSE,

August 10, 1906.

U. S. Geographic Board

1906 - 1934

Conventional Signs adopted by the U.S. Geographic Board

BOUNDARIES, MARKS, AND MONUMENTS

5

National, State, or Province Line .. ———— - - - ————

County Line ———— - - - ————

*Civil Township, District,
Precinct, or Barrio* ———— - - - ————

Reservation Line ———— - - - ————

Land-Grant Line ———— - - - ————

City, Village, or Borough ———— - - - ————

Cemetery, Small Park, etc. ———— - - - ————

*Township, Section, and Quarter Section
Lines (any one for township line alone, any
two for township and section lines* { ————
..... ————
..... ————

Township and Section Corners Recovered — + — + — + —

Boundary Monument ———— ◊ ————

Triangulation Station ———— △

Bench mark ———— B M
1232

U. S. Mineral Monument ———— ▲

Conventional Signs

6

DRAINAGE

Streams in general 

Intermittent Streams 

Lake or Pond in general
(with or without tint, waterlining, etc.) 

Salt Pond (broken shoreline if intermittent) 

Intermittent Lake or Pond 

Spring 

Falls and Rapids 

Glaciers { *Contours*
(or as below) 

Form Lines showing flow 

Confusing Names

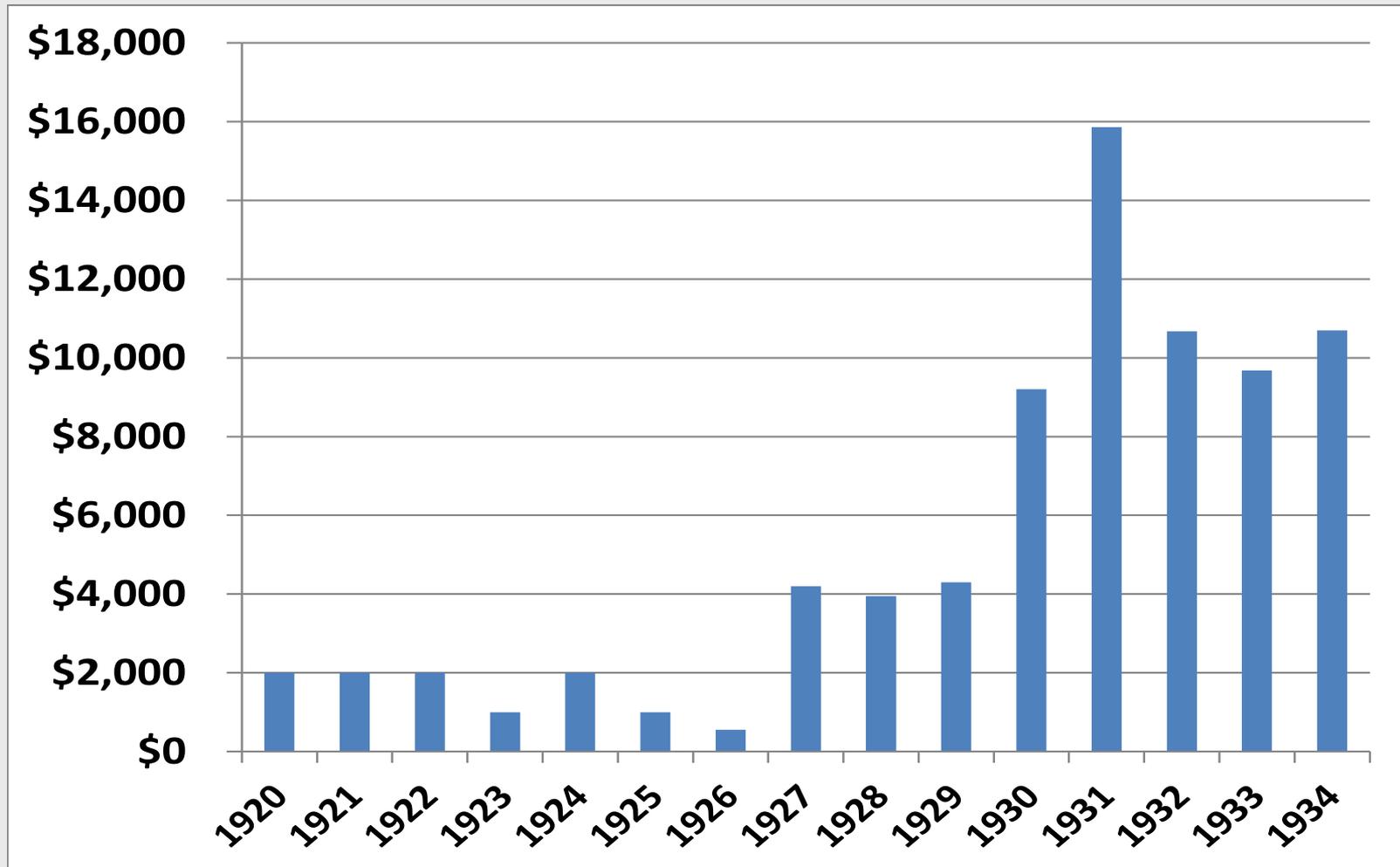


U.S. Geographic Board OUTREACH

- Advisory Board
- State Names Authorities
- National Names
Authorities

Direct Appropriations

U.S. Geographic Board 1920-1934



U. S. Geographic Board

June 1932



UNITED STATES GEOGRAPHIC BOARD

MEETING OF JUNE 1, 1932

Nelson A. Tracy
Supt. Div. of
Postmasters
Post Office Dept.
Lt. Col. H. T. Bull
General Staff
War Department

F. M. Price
Temporarily
Representing
Post Office Dept.
Rear Adm. W. R. Gherardi
Hydrographer
of the Navy

Oliver M. Maxem
Chief, Div. of
Operations
U. S. Coast Guard
S. W. Boggs
Geographer
Department of State

Joseph H. Wheat
U. S. Geological Survey
Frank Bond
Chairman

C. E. Batschelet
Geographer
Bu. of the Census
John J. Cameron
Secretary

E. E. Carter
Forest Service
Dr. Helen M. Strong
Su. of Foreign and
Domestic Commerce

J. N. B. Hewitt
Bu. of American
Ethnology

Capt. R. S. Patton
Coast and Geodetic
Survey

ABSENT MEMBERS
Col. Lawrence Martin
Library of Congress

Edward A. Huse
Govt. Printing Office

Geo. R. Putnam
Bu. of Lighthouses

UNITED STATES GEOGRAPHIC BOARD

FIRST REPORT
ON
FOREIGN
GEOGRAPHIC NAMES
1932

PREPARED BY THE COMMITTEE ON
FOREIGN GEOGRAPHIC NAMES



UNITED STATES
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON : 1932

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C. - - - - - Price 10 cents

HOW TO SPELL FOREIGN NAMES

**Geographic Board Lists
2500 of Them**

**DON'T SAY "RIO GRANDE RIVER,"
U. S. GEOGRAPHIC BOARD WARNS**

**Report Setting Americans Straight on 2,500 English
Spellings of Foreign Names Is Issued.**

Executive Order 6680

U.S. Geographic Board Abolished

Now, therefore, by virtue of and pursuant to the authority vested in me by the aforesaid section 16 of the act of March 3, 1933, **it is ordered that the United States Geographic Board be, and it is hereby, abolished;** and it is further ordered that **all of the functions of said Board, together with its chairman, secretary, and clerk-stenographer, records, supplies, equipment, and property of every kind, and unexpended balances of appropriations, be, and they are hereby, transferred to the Department of the Interior to be administered under the supervision of the Secretary of the Interior.**

Hoover Dam or Boulder Dam?



**U.S. Board on
Geographical Names**

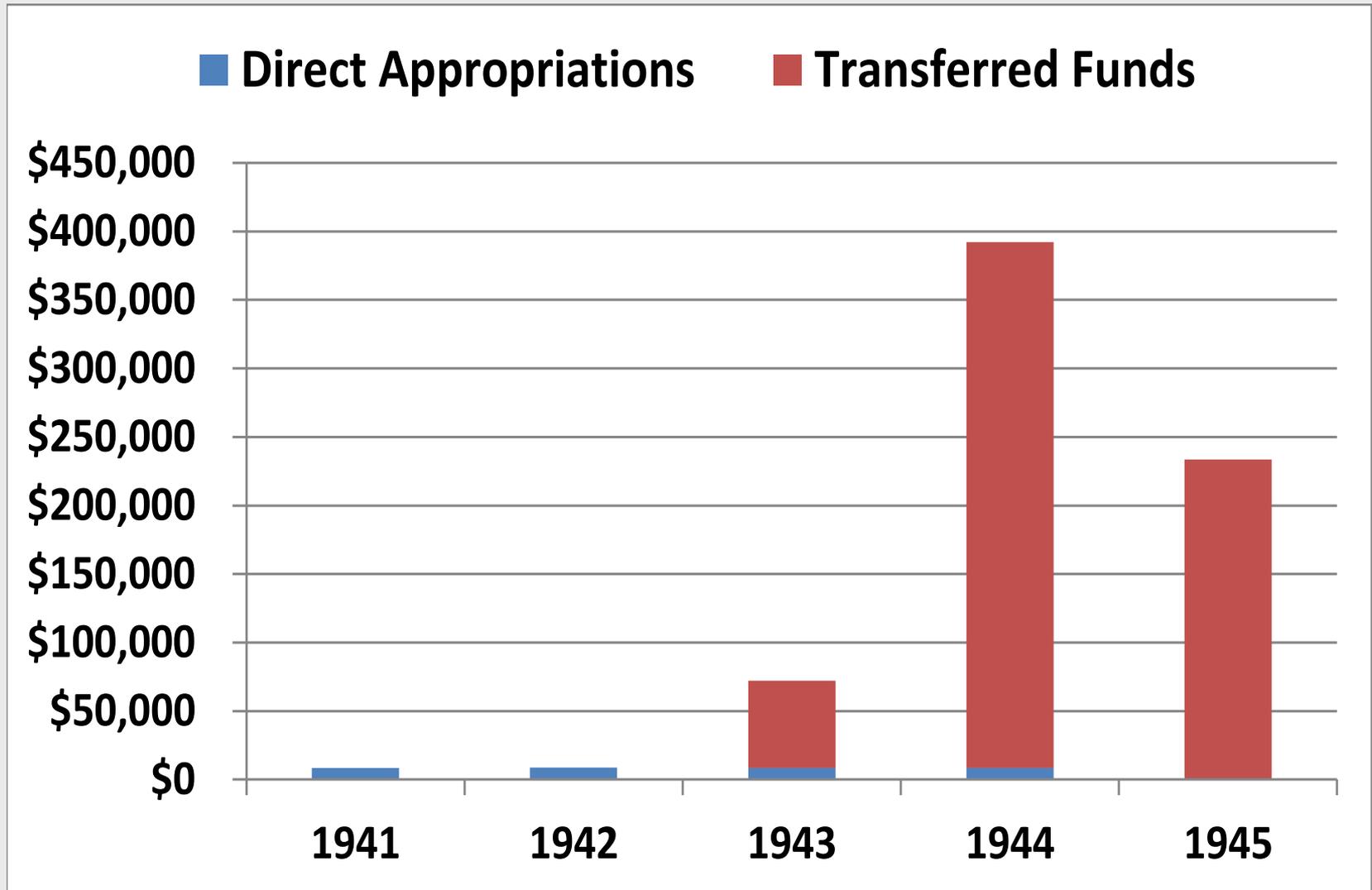
Division of Geographic Names

+

**Advisory Committee
on Geographic Names**

Funding of Division of Geography

Fiscal Years 1941 -1945





I was “about the only geographer around; so the Secretary of Interior picked me.”

U.S. Board on Geographical Names

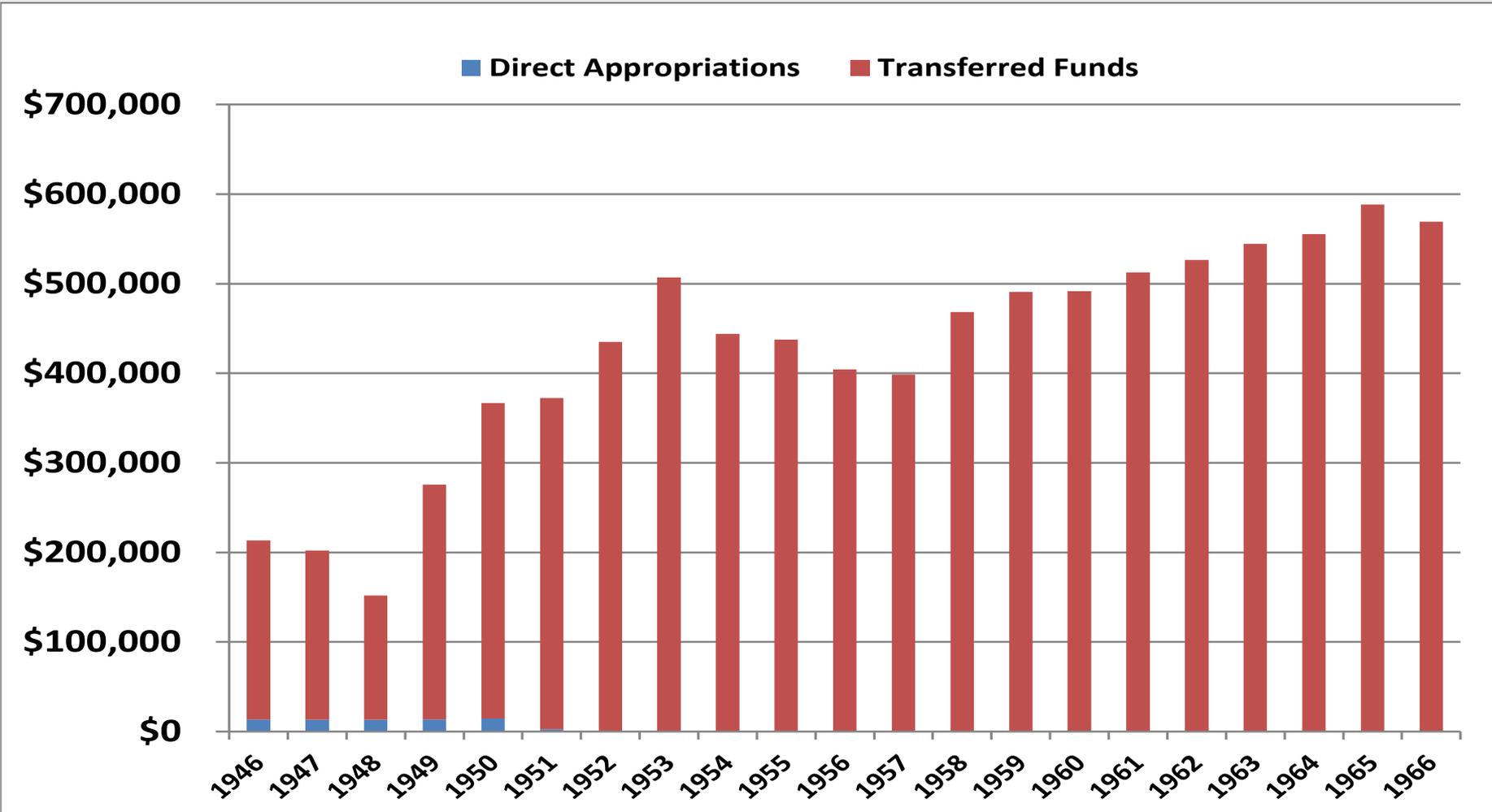
Division of Geography

+

Advisory Committee
on Geographic Names

Funding of the Office of Geography

Fiscal Years 1946-1966



Public Law 242 - 80th Congress

To provide a central authority for standardizing geographic names for the purpose of eliminating duplication in standardizing names among the Federal departments, and for other purposes. Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That **the Secretary of the Interior**, hereinafter called the Secretary, **conjointly with the Board on Geographic Names**, as hereinafter provided, **shall provide for uniformity in geographic nomenclature and orthography throughout the Federal Government**. The Secretary may exercise his functions through such officials as he may designate, except that such authority as relates to the final approval or review of actions of the Board on Geographic Names shall be exercised by him, or his Under or Assistant Secretaries.

U.S. Board on Geographic Names 1947

James B. Hunt, Chairman

Standing Committees

Executive

Domestic Names

Foreign Names

Publications

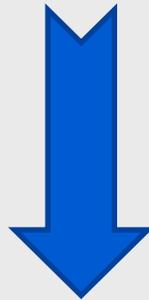
A stylized map of the United States is shown in the background, rendered in a light blue and white color scheme. The map is overlaid with a fine, dark grid pattern. The text is centered on the map.

**U.S. BOARD
ON
GEOGRAPHIC NAMES**

Domestic Names Functions

1958

Transferred



Geological Survey

Foreign Names Functions

1968

Transferred



Department of Defense,
Army Map Service

THE EVOLUTION OF THE U.S. BOARD ON GEOGRAPHIC NAMES

